



Memorandum

TO: Historic Landmarks Commission

FROM: Courtney Damkroger

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: September 23, 2003

APPROVED:

DATE:

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 3, 4, 5 & 7

SUBJECT: ST03-008. PRIVATELY INITIATED STREET RENAMING REQUEST FOR THE EXTENT OF KING ROAD (BERRYESSA ROAD TO SILVER CREEK ROAD) TO BE NAMED MARTIN LUTHER KING ROAD.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Mr. Ken and Fredella Stewart, is requesting to rename King Road, a public street, to Martin Luther King Road. King Road traverses through four City Council Districts (3, 4, 5 & 7) and extends from the south side of Berryessa Road to Silver Creek Road at the intersection of South King Road and Aborn Road.

Council Policy 6-5 (attached) states that proposed street name change of streets with historical significance will be referred to the Historic Landmarks Commission. The proposed renaming of King Road to Martin Luther King Road was referred to the Historic Landmarks Commission in July and October 2001. The synopses from the meetings are attached. Commissioners were not supportive of the name change at the July 2001 meeting, but were more supportive at the October meeting, suggesting methods for retaining the original name while honoring Dr. Martin Luther King.

The proposed name change was referred to the County Communications Office and the U.S. Postal Service, which approve of the proposed name change to Martin Luther King Road. The U.S. Postal Service did not support the proposed commemorative signage at major intersections of King Road due to concerns regarding possible confusion it might create for the Postal Service deliveries. The U.S. Postal Service did confirm that mailing addresses would need to be changed by property owners and businesses within one year of approval of the proposed name change.

The proposed street renaming is tentatively scheduled to be heard by the City Council on October 28, 2003.

Historic Context of King Road

King Road is named after, Andrew Lewis King, a Virginia native who settled in California during the Gold Rush era in 1851. Andrew Lewis King farmed approximately 95 acres of land mid-way between Alum Rock Avenue and Story Road. The Prusch (Prusch Park) and White families (White Road) also lived in the immediate area. The petition for the original naming of King Road was submitted to the County Supervisors Office in 1875 and ran through the lands of King and the White Family property. The Emma Prusch Memorial Park, located along King Road, is the last remembrance of the historical past of these three families.

Proposed Street Name – Martin Luther King Road

The applicant has submitted the street renaming application in order to honor Martin Luther King and the achievements that he made for persons of all cultural backgrounds and economic status. The applicant also identifies that the City of San Jose is the 11th largest City in the United States and is the only City out of the largest 12 in the United States that do not have a street honored after Martin Luther King. San Jose is also the third largest City in California and is the only City out of the top twelve that does not currently have a street honoring Martin Luther King with the exception of the City of Fresno.

King Road traverses through an area of the City that is rich in diversity and, as presented by the applicant, is the premier place for a street to be named Martin Luther King Road to reflect the very diverse makeup of American neighborhoods that Martin Luther King envisioned (see attached application letter).

The applicant additionally submitted a petition, of which approximately 674 out of 1057 dwelling units that have a King Road address, were contacted. Of the 674 dwelling units contacted, 88-percent signed the petition in favor of the name change.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The property owners and occupants of King Road were sent a newsletter regarding a community meeting that was held on September 18, 2003. Noticing was also provided in the San Jose Mercury News and at various neighborhood committee organizations (Mayfair, Gateway East, K.O.N.A, and West Evergreen). In addition, the Department's web-site contains information regarding the proposed street renaming and schedule. This site is used by the community to keep informed with the status of the City projects. Staff will hold a second community meeting of which a date has not been finalized.

Several Comments were noted by staff at the subject community meeting(s) and are listed below:

For Change:

- Martin Luther King died representing all cultural backgrounds and the average working man and the fact that King Road and its surrounding neighborhoods are made-up of multi-culture backgrounds creates the ideal environment to honor Martin Luther King with a street.
- Naming the street Martin Luther King will help resolve cultural diversion.

- King Road will always be King Road; just adding Martin Luther in front of it will not result in negative effects on the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Strong Neighborhood Initiative is working to beautify the neighborhoods along King Road, so why not beautify the area with Martin Luther King's name.
- No one knows who King Road is currently named after; therefore, a name change to a recent hero that current and future generation can identify with is a win-win situation for all.
- Many residents along King Road and the surrounding area already think that the street is named after Martin Luther King.
- King Road was formerly 34th Street, so the street already has a history of name changes and therefore, the change to Martin Luther King Road should not be a big issue.
- Without Martin Luther King many of the residents of San Jose and the world for that matter would not have jobs.
- The name change is for the children.
- In today's society of war, high crime rates, poverty and uncertainty, we are in need of heroes and recognizing recently fallen heroes for our children.
- The East Side of San Jose is like the United Nations of the City and therefore, should have a street named after someone that represented multi-cultural backgrounds like the United Nations.
- The proponent will raise money to pay for the changing of the signage.

Opposed:

- The need to honor local contributors to the City of San Jose's past, like Andrew Lewis King, should not be forgotten.
- I am against change naturally and am therefore against changing from King Road to Martin Luther King Road.
- The Cities re-investment on the East Side of the City and with the name change will alter the character of the area.
- The cost to change the signage would be better off spent for community programs and after-school programs.
- Latin and Spanish communities know King Road with its affiliation to the intersection of Story and King Road. The area serves as a local gathering place for the Latin and Spanish residents to communicate and share.
- The area is too closely tied, not only to Andrew Lewis King and the Spanish community that worked the fields in the area, but also to Cesar Chavez who lived in close proximity to King Road.
- Naming a beautiful library after him already recognizes Martin Luther King, why not leave it at that?
- We are not against having a street named after Martin Luther King but it should be done on a street without an existing historical context. Why not rename Willow Street to that Martin Luther King Road will intersect with Lincoln Avenue.

- This will severely impact our business due to the costs associated with changing our invoices, letterhead, checks, business cards, envelopes, ink stamps, web site, the painting on our trucks and numerous other forms.
- Andrew Lewis King's contribution to San Jose's "Valley of Heart's Delight" is no different from Steve Wozniak's or David Packard's contribution to San Jose's Silicon Valley. We need to teach our children that other people's dreams and hard work contributed to the quality of our life.
- Changing King Road would be akin to changing Woz Way in downtown San Jose 100 years from now. When someone is honored we need to continue to reflect on their contributions, not forget them. Changing names of institutions, streets, etc. already honoring someone is trivializing their important contributions to our history.
- Lack of bilingual noticing is insufficient and should be re-noticed with additional community meetings to allow for all residents to provide input on the proposed street renaming.
- Staff should hold additional community meetings in order better reflect the feelings of all the residents along King Road.

COORDINATION

As standard procedure in the street renaming review process, this project was coordinated with the County Communication Department, U.S. Postal Service, the Fire Department and the Police Department.

RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Landmarks Commission is asked to provide comments to City Council regarding the proposed street name change.

Courtney Damkroger
Historic Preservation Officer

Attachments: Council Policy
HLC Synopses July and October 2001



